Professional spaces for pre-service teachers: Sites of reality, imagination and resistance

Abstract

Questions about the practicum within teacher education tend to focus on the amount of time allocated to it in programs. In this research, we were interested in the quality of the experience rather than assuming 'more is better'. To understand *what is going on* and *where*, this study focussed on the school and specially the departmental office of room as a site for workplace learning. Using qualitative methods we constructed narratives from the data provided by a cohort of four-year bachelor degree pre-service teachers during and following their final major (10 week) practicum experience. Using theories of spatiality to make sense of the data, we found that the narratives revealed stories of spaces where compliance, disappointment were the key features of the practicum, and where resistance through absence (from the departmental office) was an important strategy to manage the experience. This research challenges the 'more is better' argument.

Key words

Practicum, spatial theory, workplace learning, departmental staffroom or office, narrative

Introduction

Teacher education continues to attract attention regarding the need for revision and reform (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001; Darling-Hammond 2000; Ferfolja, 2008; Smyth, 2006; Tinning, 2004; Zeichner, 2003). In Australia for example there are calls for improved (new) teacher ability in personal literacy levels, subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skill. Such accounts, which are not isolated to Australia, demonstrate the sensitive and contested terrain of teacher education.

Similarly, arguments prevail around the significance of the practicum in terms of impact on pre-service learning, its place in teacher education and the amount of time allocated to it within programs. Such questions are of ongoing importance but were not the focus of this study. Our interests were in delving more deeply into what is *actually going on*, and *where*, in terms of the school as the place of work-based learning. Arguments for more workplace time in schools for pre-

service teacher learning (Colquhoun, 2005) need to be informed about the nature and quality of such learning rather than assuming 'more is better'. As such we intend to unpack the place of work with a focus on, but not limited to, the staffroom or the subject department office or room.

Using qualitative methods of focus group and individual semi-structured interview the researchers were able to construct narratives from the data provided by a cohort of four-year bachelor degree pre-service teachers during and following their final major (10 week) practicum experience with an initial focus on the subject department office or department 'staffroom' as a significant site of workplace learning regardless of the quality of that learning. We were mindful that the literature shows subject department offices to be a powerful influence on professional identity development, professionalism and on a sense of belonging (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005; Talbert, 1995). Talbert (1995) as well as others (see Siskin & Little, 1995), argue that the culture or subculture of the department is a key to how a department functions. Our previous work (Rossi, lisahunter., Tinning, & Macdonald, 2008; Sirna, Tinning, & Rossi, 2008) found that subject departments had conventional boundaries and did indeed act as work places for the development of professional subjectivities through the process of learning. However they were neither fixed nor dependable in such function. Distinctive sub-cultures exist in some of these workplaces, ones that might provide support, trust, and openness, but may be self referential enclaves, examples of balkanised spaces of 'cosy collaboration' (Hargreaves, 1994). Such places might be conceptualized as communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) although we argue here that such a conceptualization fails to register the more dynamic processes suggested by how the practices of those communities actually feature in the production of spaces (Lefebvre, 1991). Hence we were drawn to investigate how professional spaces were not only produced through the day to day work of a department but how they were negotiated across Lefebvre's (1991) three moments of space, that is, perceived (physical), conceived (representative) and lived (representational) spaces of the work place. It was our view that knowledge of such dynamics may help in better understandig what is going on, where and just as importantly why.

Tony Rossi 31/5/11 1:07 PM
Formatted: Indent: First line: 1.27 cm, Line spacing: double, Don't adjust space between Latin and Asian text, Don't adjust space between Asian text and numbers

Tony Rossi 31/5/11 1:07 PM
Deleted: . .

Tony Rossi 31/5/11 2:11 PM
Formatted: Not Highlight

In spite of the importance attached to the subject department as a site of learning we realised that a concrete bounding of sites of learning might have limitations. The narratives from the field confirmed this and encouraged us to widen our research interests so that we could better understand just 'what is going on'. Hence though the departmental staffroom or office was our original starting point, like Nespor (2002) we chose not to cocoon the site of study and considered a less bounded canvas. To make sense of this, we drew upon theories of spatiality, considering these to have the potential for greater explanatory account of the diaspora of narratives we were encountering.

Our intentions in this paper then are first, to articulate the particular epistemological frame of reference by drawing on the work of spatial theorists particularly Lefebvre (1991) and Soja (1996) and connecting this to the school as a workplace. We then offer two narratives involving multiple characters. The first uses the device of a composite; that is the character is made up of a number of the research participants. The second narrative we have called a realist tale of the experiences of two young men. We conclude with a discussion of the findings through the lens of spatial theory.

The Space Trialectic: Lefebvre and Soja

At the risk of naked reductionism and perhaps unforgiveable oversimplification, we argue that it is helpful to consider contemporary conceptualizations of space as a trialectic (or triple dialectic) as constructed by both Lefebvre (1991) and Soja (1996). For both Lefebvre and Soja the real and imagined notions of space developed as part of an ongoing analysis of the 'urban' and for Soja this culminated in his unique analysis of the city of Los Angeles. This may appear somewhat abstract for our context. However, the trialectic provides a powerful backdrop with which to explain the phenomena of a working staffroom and beyond.

For Lefebvre, his interests were in going beyond the idea that space was just about territory, property, production and inevitably, the concept of 'ownership' Rather Lefebvre saw space as culturally and historically shaped. In doing so, the relationships across spaces became ever more important to him since these relationships formed the basis of the means of production. Space as he

saw it was perceived (or physical), conceived (represented) and lived (representational). By this Lefebvre meant that space was experienced in an embodied sense, the physical sense of space governed some actions and ways of being. This he argued intersected with conceived space or how space came to be represented or indeed thought about sometimes in abstract or even design terms. Lefebvre, even though he was determined to get beyond the idea that space was the context for the means of the production of capital goods and the environment in which the structure of work was commensurate with this, he was mindful that town planners, architects and so on, in a world moving inexorably towards mass urbanisation, were conceiving spaces where living and working were seamless and where the production and accumulation of capital could occur unfettered.

Soja (1996) acknowledges the ideational principle of the conceived or 'Secondspace' but goes onto argue that such spaces are not without material reality and that often they become manifest as 'Firstspace' in the form of planned projects which draw upon rational science to see them into reality. They often take the form of rational solutions to complex Firstspace problems such as overcrowding, relocation of industry and citizens, shifting labour patterns, availability of venture capital, re-zoning, and urban renewal to mention a few. As Soja (1991) says, 'the imagined geography tends to become the "real" geography, with the image or representation coming to define and order reality'(p. 79). The representational, or lived space as Lefebvre called it, is perhaps somewhat more abstract but might be understood as a space of the imagination and resistance. Lefebvre originally ascribed this space to the Avant Garde, the surrealists in particular. For Lefebvre this was the site of counter discourses and of undermining conventional and conceived spatiality. Today, (given that he died in 1991), Lefebvre might be reasonably impressed by the capacity of cyber-space to fulfil this role. Soja (1996) prefers to refer to this as the 'Thirdspace' and similarly he regards this as the 'starting point for this re-opening and re-thinking of new possibilities…' (p.81). Moreover, Soja (1996) argues that 'Thirdspace as a concept is not sanctified in and of itself. The critique does not stop at three, to construct a holy trinity, but to build further, to

move on, to continuously expand the production knowledge beyond what is presently known' (p.61). For Soja and Lefbvre, Thirdspace is the space of limitless possibilities.

Connecting to the project: Spatiality, and schools as workplaces **Put more material in gere about the practices of communities and comm. of practice**

Tony Rossi 31/5/11 6:02 PM
Formatted: Font:Not Italic, Font color: Red

Harvey (1989) draws from Lefebvre's ideas to explore how places are represented in discourse and constructed and experienced as material artefacts. Hubbard (2002) summarises the relationship and history of place/space in cultural geography, capturing the ambiguity and tensions inherent in the concept/s. He notes that 'both space and place are made and remade through networks that involve people, practices, languages and representations', suggesting that the 'key question about space and place is not what they are, but what they do' (p. 47). The importance then of place and space to represent positive workplaces, significant for the wellbeing and professional nurturing of new teachers, is significant. Moreover, professional workspaces in terms of an in-school experience for pre-service teachers must either purposefully create a haven of professional development or stand questioned by the profession if they do not.

What constitutes 'school' is made up of sets of social relations such as student teacher (or pre-service teacher), teacher-teacher, administrator-teacher and parent-teacher. Likewise, at particular points in time, when pre-service teachers enter the realm of school as 'training ground', a workplace that is not fully available to them when compared with a 'qualified' teacher, another set of social relations are brought into play to a greater or lesser extent in different school contexts. The place of school defines 'teacher' and within that a range of possibilities is the positioning of those we refer to as student teachers and this may be any or all of colleague, a resource of new knowledge, a new teacher, a 'not quite whole' teacher, not a real teacher, the teacher's assistant, and others. While the school might be more generally described as the temporary 'workplace' of the pre-service teacher, McGregor (2003) identified the temporary workplace more specifically as the teachers' classroom and the department office. Staffrooms have been documented as places of importance for the perpetuation of hegemonic forms of social and professional relations (Sirna et al

2008; McGregor, 2004) 'where social relations most clearly embody the present and past micropolitical structure of the school' (McGregor, 2003: 362). As such they are important sites where teacher identity work is carried out (Talbert, 1995, McGregor, 2003, Sirna et al, 2010).

Crafting a method

Process and technique

This study traced the experiences of a cohort of final year students during their final professional experience (practicum or teaching practice) placement (school). We were interested to understand the *where*, *how* and *with whom* professional learning took place and how subject positions were constructed and taken up, with an emphasis on the place of the staffroom. The second author conducted semi-structured interviews, of approximately two hours with 16 participants, who had just completed their final professional experience placement. These were recorded and subsequently transcribed by an external service provider. The transcriptions were read and listened to by the first or second author and were checked for accuracy. The first author then analyzed the transcripts for key incidents, observations, regular and constant themes and reflections in order to create storylines or narrative threads (Thomas et al, 2009) or storymaps (Richmond, 2002). To do this, the transcribed text was placed into the left hand column of a two column, one row table. The storylines were then constructed in the right hand column using the text from the left column. This process, inevitably reductionist, enabled what was considered to be surplus text to be edited out leaving units of text from which to construct meaning. As the interviews were not temporal in nature the stories were not necessarily serialised or sequential; a feature of narratives generally considered important. In this case however, the narratives that emerged told a story of the whole experience based on sedimented memory, recall and re-construction. As might be expected, the stories were inevitably structured around the questions and prompts that were used. The questions were far from random and were inspired by our experiences in a small pilot study and by the emerging data sets across the whole project.

In addition periodic emails were requested from the students using a particular template at each point. These related to teaching, staffroom presence, enjoyment, learning, personnel and a general sense of what it meant to be at that particular school. These were not particularly successful for a range of reasons principal among them was the irregular commitment to the process. We discovered later in interview that the problems of privacy within schools made this difficult to do. Therefore rather than be drawn into the emerging narratives they were used as a modest cross check of the stories and as a way to 'feedback' the emerging narratives as a form of member checking. Upon the conclusion of the practicum experience (10 weeks) the students re-gathered in class (not taught by either of the authors or other members of the broader research team) to finish the university semester. At one of these sessions the entire research team was granted access to the students and two focus group discussions were conducted. These were audio-recorded and the data served as additional crosscheck material for the emerging narratives.

Representing people, places and spaces

We constructed a set of narratives from the data to emphasise the nuances and processes in the experiences of the emerging new teachers in this transitional space. This genre of research is said to produce situated knowledge rather than universals and attempts to capture the detail of social life (e.g., through 'slice of life' accounts, Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) rather than abstracting from this detail to produce reductive models. Through narratives (Clandinin. Downey & Huber, 2009) we explored how new teacher subjectivities might become constructed through workplace relations within the context of the departmental staffroom. These narratives are presented below to illustrate the main plot lines (Clandinin & Connelly 1996) or narrative threads (Thomas et al 2009) of our participants' experiences. We have used two different techniques to represent the three stories we have opted included in this paper. The first is a fictional tale of someone we have called Tess. We have identified her as a high performing netball player whose placement was in a state (Government) high school. Drawing upon the techniques used by Rossi et al (2007) and Ryan 2005, Tess is a constructed composite character made from more than one student who reported similar

stories across the practicum experience. There is always a risk that this technique implies a generalised account that can be attributed to all the participants in this study. That is not the case. There was adequate similarity across six out of the eight female participants that suggested a single representation to cover the particular experiences represented by Tess was legitimate. It is not an exhaustive account of all of the experiences of all of the females in the study but a representation of the experiences that were common across some of them. Using a composite allows us to demonstrate that Tess's story was not unique. We have segmented Tess's tale into different stories of space. For the females in this study, these spaces were disconcertingly common. We then follow this with a realist tale (Sparkes, 2002) of two characters we have called Gareth and Mike, two men with a deep sense of mission whose placements were in different but what might be perceived as highly desirable schools. We have told these tales combined and in their entirety rather than in segmented episodes as with Tess. Additionally, we have not used a temporal scale for any of the stories, as they were not told to us in this way. In our view the 'whole' of the story in each case is more than the sum of the episodes and in telling their stories as a form of response to our prompts the participants often used flashback memory techniques. So rather than re-order the stories to suit a conventional temporal re-construction, we have maintained the fidelity of the stories as they were revealed to us. After the telling of the narratives, we offer an analytical discussion as a dialogue between the relevant literature, the theoretical framework identified at the beginning of this paper and the pre-service teacher stories.

Tess – a fictional tale of many spaces

Tony Rossi 31/5/11 1:56 PM
Deleted: .

Occupying space – Space of the material

Tess was often described as a 'big' girl. In fact one of her 'colleagues' Des, an older member of the PE Department to which she had been assigned suggested that she was no "shrinking violet" the subtext of his commentary was palatable. For Tess, an accomplished netball player, the obsession with people's looks and size was somewhat puzzling. She expected to be judged on her teaching

ability and possibly (but with less importance) on her sporting skills. However it was quite apparent that how one 'took up space' and with what physical assets (or liabilities depending on one's perspective) attracted attention. Those who took up space through augmented (via gym workouts) muscularity were considered differently, so large muscular men seemed not to attract the same level of critical scrutiny. As a site for learning Tess soon realised that she had to, as she described, "shape up or get out". So she started to think about what she wore. There were two reasons for this: she did not want to appear as "scruffy" or "daggy" to . More importantly wearing her tracksuit pants more often meant she could conceal her legs and reduced in her sense at least of her "size" (a term she preferred rather than weight). It was clear to her that, as she subsequently described, "the weight I carry" provided a catalyst for the chattering classes in the staffroom. In addition she made sure she wore her "rep trakkies"[1]. This gave her sporting credibility that allowed her to connect to the 'social space' through her sporting achievements and to be able to engage in what she called "sports talk and other chatter". Tess did other things to reduce her sense of size: "I sit mostly behind my desk when I am in the staffroom" was one of her strategies. She also felt compelled to sit in certain ways and was constantly thinking about her bodily positions, As a consequence she tended not to sprawl (as others did) as she might at home and her attention to female deportment depressingly, occupied a lot of her thinking time in the staffroom.

Sally, a student teacher from another university did not take up space. Her lissom frame and flowing hair made her something of a favourite in the staffroom. Sally had figured out that in the staffroom she had to 'perform'. In conversations with Tess, she would stress the importance of playing the game, "get them on-side – talk to them about footy[2] and stuff like that" she would say. Tess thought the staff room would be a place of educational discourse where talk of curriculum, pedagogy and learning could be soaked up. This was her vision of professional learning. She realised pretty quickly that this would not be the place where this happened and came to understand

[1] The trouser part of the track suit uniform of a player chosen to represent a region/State - Tess was a recognized state level player

[2] In Australia this term is most likely to refer to rugby league or Australian Rules Football

that for her, the learning she was more likely to encounter was going to be more to do with how she connected to her supervisor and the relationship she was able to develop across the duration of the placement, how she could be less conspicuous within the departmental space, and how she could conjure opportunities that took her away from the HPE department so as not to be under its gaze. As time wore on, she also realised, as did Sally that professional immersion was far more likely in the second teaching area … the science department.

You too can be part of this space… Welcome to "our world"

The social space started to intersect with other spaces later into the practicum. Tess took Sally's advice and started to talk about 'footy' Initially she had to tread carefully "what football should I talk about" she thought to herself. The competing codes of football in the metropolitan region where the school was located meant that Tess had to gauge which of them was most talked about. Given that she was not in a private school it was unlikely to be rugby union but through diligent listening in the mornings before school started, the only time there was relative peace in the staffroom she figured out that Australian Rules was dismissively considered "aerial ping pong" and football meant mainly rugby league. Once she had figured this out, every Monday before going to school she would rise early and log on to the Bay City Mail* – the local regionally based newspaper and check the rugby league results from the weekend. She also checked the table standings, who had been "a naughty boy" (she was often spoilt for choice here but couldn't help ridiculing the oft reported bad behaviour of top level players), if there were any controversies etc. She was mindful that she did not want to be seen as a "football wannabe" it was strategic to contribute to what she described as the "morning sports talk". She also tried to watch the Sunday afternoon game each week. For Tess this was mind numbing but with the help of her younger brother she got the hang of the game and was able to talk about it not like an expert but as someone able to make reasonable comment. She occasionally talked about netball and wondered why the two female members of staff didn't, given

* A pseudonym

that they both played. However she quickly realised that netball was routinely ignored as a topic of conversation.

As her credibility grew she found that attitudes to her size were tempered and social invitations started to occur. “Tess, a group of us, and some others from maths and languages, are going to stay behind for a bit of 5-a-side (indoor, small sided soccer) on Friday”, “we usually go to the pub afterwards for a beer or two – there are some other females that play …” came the invitations from one of the department members. Whilst not wanting to get saddled with them all night, she thought this might be a good opportunity to mix and she was none the less, pleased to be invited.

Becoming a teacher – Needing a space of resistance … and of enlightenment

The professional space Tess realised was not going to be straightforward. Her assigned supervisor was Damian; he was a relatively recent graduate and was covering Maureen who was on maternity leave. It wasn’t a straight cover, the classes had been redistributed and Damian was covering some of Maureen’s PE classes, her health classes and also her science. This meant Damian was able to be Tess’ supervisor in both the PE and Science subject areas. Damian was noticeably quieter than the others but Tess could not make out whether this was because he was naturally shy or simply because he was new and not a ‘real’ member of staff. In fact Tess thought is was a bit tough on Damian to be given this task and yet really not shocked. Student teachers were bothersome, they took time that most teachers did not have, they needed looking after in terms of where to go for various needs (paper, photocopier, equipment, keys etc) and they had to be evaluated, not a task seemingly liked by the teachers in this department. It was generally voiced by experienced teachers in the school that the school (the “chalkface” as it was incessantly referred to) was “the place where you learn to be a teacher”. Yet curiously the construction of the spaces meant there was little intersection of professional learning. Rather the departmental staffroom was for the kettle, where you kept your gear and marking, where you kept your resources and lesson notes but not where you talked about pedagogy or curriculum. It did not appear to be a place where you learned what Tess

called the “how to teach” bit of becoming a teacher. It was not that the teachers in this department were not committed, they were they were just not committed to a role in teacher education. Damian though was different. He liked to talk about pedagogy and curriculum and even sports coaching and he encouraged Tess to experiment. He challenged her to design ways of meeting syllabus expectations and then probe her with questions as recalled by Tess such as “so what is the purpose of this activity”, “what are you seeking to achieve here”; “I like this idea, how might you extend it for the children requiring greater challenge”. In return Tess would offer ideas about assessment or some of her thoughts about inquiry based pedagogy. This flowed over into the science teaching they shared and in time Tess noticed that Damian chose to spend more time in the science department where they talked about lots of things including ironically, sport. It was subtle; Damian would say that there was no point in going back to the Department staffroom for break as he was teaching again in science again after. Tess, when she took over the classes also adopted this strategy. It was nicer she found than being in a room with two departments that seemed to hate each other. For Damian and increasingly for Tess the science department was a space of resistance; resistance to all they did not like about the living stereotype in the PE department. When the first evaluation was due, Damian insisted that they go somewhere quiet to talk about her performance. He asked Tess how she would rate her performance. At first she was embarrassed to answer, so he prompted her further “OK let’s think about all the things you consider are strengths”. This was easier for Tess as it meant she could list things, part of her rationalist training. Of course it also meant Tess was asked to list her weaknesses. However she found that once into the dialogue she was able to speak freely; talk about what she wanted to change, about where she lacked confidence and about the things she wanted from Damian in terms of guidance. In turn this gave Damian a framework to devise some strategies to help Tess work on the areas she clearly needed to develop further.

Gradually she worked out a compromise routine. She would spend enough time in the PE department to look committed and be involved, and to play social sport. She realised too, that she

was learning to be a teacher through the intersections of the multiple spaces; however she was learning to be a professional through her relationship with Damian.

Falling short of expectations - – a realist tale of Mike and Gareth

Gareth and Mike had a lot in common. They had spent their first field experience together in the same primary school; they were both involved with children's physical activity programs through youth groups, and both professed a deep sense of commitment to teaching physical education and coaching sport and the positive impact this could have on children. Sadly their experiences were very different not only from each other but from what they expected and these stories do not end in anticipated ways!

A Sporting Centre of Excellence is usually a highly sought after placement for most HPE students. For Gareth it backfired from day one. Gareth though was stuck in a Rugby League Centre of Excellence; his sporting expertise however was in soccer. Ordinarily this would not be a problem for most HPE students who have enough ability to accommodate such a placement. This was different though and his whole identity as a teacher was challenged principally because of his lack of background in a primary focus area of the HPE program. His self-doubt started when it became clear to him that many of his pupils had vastly superior knowledge of the game. The HPE 'staffspace' was in a multi-department location with at least 20 people. The size and scale of this place was overwhelming and impersonal for Gareth. The sheer "flat out busyness of the place" as he described it, made it difficult to get to know anyone not least of all, his supervising teacher. In addition Gareth could identify at least three other teachers to whom he seemed to be directly answerable. Any ideas of being innovative, exploratory or experimental was just fantasy. Gareth was, as he described it, "in survival mode".

Mike was placed in a Christian School. This was just as he wanted it given his own faith and interests in working in such an environment at the completion of his program. It was a grades 1-12 (5-17 years of age) school and so offered Mike the opportunity to work with a wide range of children that he saw as part of the mission of teaching. He considered the staff to be good people

and regarded them as generally helpful. However he couldn't help but be struck by what he called "a lot of internal issues amongst the teachers". He found himself often in the unexpected role of confidante or "sounding board" when teachers wanted to gossip about other teachers. This was not an experience he had anticipated and immediately put him in a difficult position; one which woud have ramifications later.

As a consequence of the age range within which Mike was asked to teach, it meant he became directly involved with the Smart Moves initiative, a large scale Government backed campaign to increase the level of physical activity in schools. This had made him think of the to the idea of sport differently and he quickly reassessed what he saw as the role of sport. He realised that being physically active and getting young people to value physical activity was what was emerging as important for him. As a result he re-focussed his teaching towards a more health-based orientation. However, his renewed focus of "physical activity for all to enjoy" as he now described it was the antithesis of what he saw as the driving force of the department which was highly selective competitive sport. He later came to describe th department as "totally sports driven". He came to appreciate why the PE classes in the school were organised around the discourse of sports performance rather than participation. The central purpose as he saw it was improving school team performance to enhance the school's reputation within the school sporting association with which it was affiliated. Given Mike's epiphany about physical activity this was more than a little problematic not to mention incongruent with what he had learned about curriculum copnstruction and State syllabus documents back at the university. However, as he said he "just rolled with it a little bit" and performed in a way to portray a certain image, what Goffman (1959) calls 'impression management'.

For Mike to get his physical activity message across though he had to find other means. He started a cross-country club. This was what he had had to call it to legitimise its existence. In reality it was a fitness club where he took the time to ask the children about their interests, where this type of activity fitted into their lives outside of school, how perhaps they used this kind of physical

activity and in particular the potential health benefits it might have over a longer term. He was being what he eventually described as a "physical activity counsellor". His mission, at this school at least was now "outside the curriculum".

For Gareth, the staff members at the Centre of Excellence were not even aware of the words Smart Moves. The emphasis was all about "winning as much as possible". He found that programs of physical activity that sat outside the Centre of Excellence were more about play and this was entirely inconsistent with his training and his own sense of what education in physical activity was about. It was little more than a form of childminding as far as he could see. Clearly, anything not associated with the Centre of Excellence was regarded as frivolous and was nothing to do with motor competence, health or well being or development, the very things that sat at the heart of Gareth's philosophy of participation in sport.

Gareth described the instruction within the CoE as overtly "command style teaching in order to drive for sporting success". This seemed to be associated with the use of former (elite level) players in the teaching and coaching programs. It was clear that the students involved in the CoE expected this approach. As far as he could tell this was "as it should be" because of the significant cultural capital the external coaches possessed. Indeed Gareth could see that the ex-players were regarded as so highly knowledgeable and therefore their approach must be what he called "absolutely right". He suggested this was the accepted discourse "regardless of whether they had any training or education in teaching". Consequently, there was little talk of curriculum or pedagogy in the PE staff room or for that matter in any of the 'professional' discussions he had with his supervisor.

Mike generally was well supported in his interests of exploring alternative pedagogies. His supervising teacher was upfront about how she did not explore too many other approaches outside of the more traditional methods. Mike accepted this as he knew at least his orientation to the syllabus and the pedagogies advocated by it, would not be challenged. It was clear to Mike though that there was not even a nodding acknowledgement to the State syllabus much less any idea of the

latest manifestation of the document and this was an initiative about to hit schools. As far as he was concerned some of the teacher practices were in fact inconsistent with the syllabus guidelines. Mike was aware that over the last 10 years many HPE departments had routinely ignored the syllabus as it was not a mandated document and stories back on campus about how the syllabus was still in its cellophane wrapper in some schools were now more easily understood. However what bothered Mike most was that some of the practices in the school contradicted not only the syllabus and its socially critical orientation, but were inconsistent with how he understood both his Christianity and the social justice message enshrined in the faith of the school. Children were routinely discriminated against because of their weight (or rather fatness or body shape) or their motor incompetence and even gender. Also the reciprocal to this, great privilege bestowed on those with athletic bodies and high motor competence, to the point of exaggerated grades, was in great evidence confirming some of the work of Hay and Macdonald (2010). Now while Mike had read plenty of literature about this in his course work, he had not expected to see it in a faith based school and to this end it was a direct challenge to his beliefs about diversity, equity, supportive environments – all of which are the underpinning principles of the syllabus but which for Mike, more importantly, were the major tenets of his faith. For Mike this was deeply disappointing, as far as he was concerned it simply reinforced a neo-liberal agenda of individualism and exclusion and he found this increasingly difficult to the point where he began to question whether schools were the best place for what he saw as his mission and increasingly recognised that his capacity to contribute to the lives of children in a positive way was more likely to exist outside of the education system.

Spaces in Schools: sites of reality, imagination and resistance

It is apparent in these tales that the space of the PE staffroom was conceived in certain ways that when experienced, governed the nature of practice and action. As a field of practice, the practicum teachers carried little capital (for Gareth, there was no capital at all). Tess found a way to traverse the space of the HPE staffroom and skilfully used her sporting prowess as capital or currency to be

exchanged. It worked for her in that it led to invitations to other spaces. Before entering their practicum workplaces all of the pre-service teachers imagined the staffroom as a space of enlightenment; this was how the space was imagined or to use Soja's language it was the 'Secondspace' of representation or what Lefebvre refers to as conceived space.. It was going to be the place (in a realist sense) where they 'became somebody'. It was apparent in the focus group conversations that as a collective in classes on campus, these students had been encouraged to think creatively and to take intellectual risks. On the other hand they fully understood that with virtually no capital there would be a certain amount of "serving apprenticeships" as one group member suggested. This did not appear to be problematic. Their ideational constructions of the staffroom space were that it would provide the context in which they would transition from student to teacher.

Site of Reality - Perceiving space through compliance

In all cases the perceived space was one of compliance. This is hardly new. However if we construe the HPE staffroom as a site for identity work as others have done (see Sirna et al, 2010) it appears to us that the potential for constraining identity work through compliance might not exactly be cause for celebration. The discourse of extra curricular sport so acutely defined as an important identity tag for the school (in all cases) meant that in spite of curriculum development and subject status enhancement over at least a 20 year period (in Australia and probably elsewhere), the curriculum in health and physical education was a very poor cousin. The pre-service teachers in this study, all well drilled in the social construction of curriculum and official syllabus expectations together with socially critical credentials found that 'in-class' time amounted to little more than child-minding at worst and pedagogy of the most banal kind at best. However all the pre-service teachers found themselves caught up in it. The teachers at the schools all worked hard in the day to day maelstrom of the working environment, and this critique stands as no challenge to their commitment as teachers or their capacity for hard work. However barely a word was spoken about pedagogy, curriculum, or philosophy in the form of either collective discursive exchanges or in the quiet one to one mentoring opportunities. So whilst much was learned in the staffroom context it

had to do with impression management (Goffman, 1959) and local compliance nuances peculiar to each school. So in the examples provided here the professional space was a space of possibility at the start but soon became a space of harsh materiality based on the exigencies of day-to-day life in a department.

Conceived Spaces: Real or Imagined?

The pre-service teachers included in this paper conceived the space in which they were expected to spend most time outside of the classroom (namely the physical education staff room or department office) in certain ways that were mostly imagined. The narratives here indicate that the imagined space would be one of ongoing discursive exchange, of constant professional engagement and a place where learning to be a professional teacher would happen in a convivial yet committed manner. In reality, the spaces were characterised by ad-hoc forms of professional development, taken for granted assumptions about the capacities of pre-service teachers and only modest professional engagement. Of greater concern perhaps, the space became a space of disappointment. Admittedly not all the students in the study as a whole experienced this. However it is reasonable to suggest that experiences of the staff room space fell well below expectations. Many students in the study beyond those, whose stories are recounted here, realised that it was crucial to spend time in the department for reasons well articulated by Sirna et al as social rather than professional. Tess, one of the characters included here, is a composite and would be representative of this strategy. Across the cohort the strategy of absence was wide spread. By this we mean that an unexpectedly large proportion of this group found ways to be absent from the department (or at least distant from it) yet appear to be a part of it. This strategy though risky was executed with great skill. We came to recognize this as the space of absence or drawing on our theoretical framework, the space of resistance. ‘Absence’ was Soja’s *Thirdspace*

Resistance and counter discourses: becoming absent as a 'Thirdspace"

Absence was the space of resistance and in being so it became a second space with a degree of material reality. The narratives in this paper tell stories of absence from the PE department, as a way of managing their (partial) membership of it. So whilst the alternative spaces into which the students went were real, they were not the real space of resistance. This came through absence and the key to the strategy was not to look disinterested (or indeed disappointed) but to move into spaces that were connected to but separate from the PE department office. Even the science department was able to act as a space of resistance and yet not appear as a competing space where the students would rather be. This illusion was made all the more possible by the teaching responsibilities many of the PE staff had in science (a particular nuance of the second subject arrangements at this institution and others within the same city). In other words there was a sort of quasi alliance between science and PE (which has well developed historical connections) that allowed science to be an(other) space without it seeming to act as a site of resistance.

The spaces of resistance were many and varied and ranged from sports coaching, additional classes, clubs, offering support to the school production (drama), support to the music department (orchestra/band practice), support for senior revision classes in preparation for external assessments and submission of final work portfolios. All of these had the appearance of wanting to be fully involved in the school yet by their nature required absence from specific spaces within it, namely the department office. Indeed all practicum students are encouraged to extend the scope of their in-school experiences. However that is only part of the story for the students in this study. These spaces provided the necessary opportunities to be absent from the PE department for professional reasons but also as wilful resistance, for these students in spite of the material reality these spaces had, they represented the *Thirdspace*.

Conclusion

The seeming abstract nature of Lefbvre's and Soja's work may seem a world away from life in schools and in particular the subject area staffrooms or departments. However, there is no doubt that

the physical geography of staffrooms and its representation as a professional space was experienced in certain ways and encouraged certain behaviours. The space was conceived in such a way, in all our study cases, based on certain *expected* conduct that was either docile compliance because of direct surveillance, inferred low status based on proximal positioning of newcomers, and of most concern the seeming indifference to the development of the next wave of professionals. Imagined spaces were those in which an idealised version of professional development took place: a space of educational discourse, conversation and professional stimulation. Sadly in this study such spaces were rare. Finally, the spaces of resistance, the Thirdspace, became increasingly apparent to us but around themes of absence (i.e. from the intended professional space to which the student teacher was nominally placed at the school) and a re-routed sense of professional obligation. In other words, many of our participants 're-routed' their professional obligation and commitments to other spaces within the school or in some cases to different parts of the education system altogether.

It is regrettable that we find it necessary to report on the professional space of the departmental staffroom/office in terms of compliance, disappointment and resistance. Our sense is that professional spaces and those that inhabit them are obligated to the next wave of professionals about to join the ranks or even help them decide whether the profession is for them or not. At least this is a form of mentoring and advocacy which regardless of outcome is to be valued. However, we cannot say, at least with any confidence, that this was obviously available. The consequence was, in an uncomfortable number of cases (captured by but beyond the realm of the narratives here), a desire to resist in ways that first, would not harm their chances at being highly rated for teaching (a process of graduate teacher ranking used in the Australian State where the research took place) and secondly could limit the necessity to always be a part of the PE 'space'. It strikes us that not only is this counter intuitive, it is counter productive as a way of developing the next generation of health and physical education teachers and as a consequence it should force our hand to re-think the process of field based experience as part of the developing new professionals at both the local school level but potentially and more importantly at a national policy level.

Acknowledgement

This research was funded by the Australian Research Council.

References

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. 1996. Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes: Teacher stories, stories of teachers. School stories, stories of schools. *Educational Researcher* 25, no. 3: 24-30.

Clandinin, D. J., Downey, C. A., & Huber, J. 2009. Attending to changing landscapes: Shaping the interwoven identities of teachers and teacher educators. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 37, no. 2: 141-154.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Fries, M. K. 2001. Sticks, stones, and ideology: The discourse of reform in teacher education. *Educational Researcher* 30, no. 8: 3–15.

Colquhoun, L. 2005. Teacher training in a class of its own., *The Australian Higher Education Supplement*, December 21, Letters to the Editor.

Darling-Hammond, L. 2000. How teacher education matters. *Journal of Teacher Education* 51, no. 3: 166-173.

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. 2005. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Ferfolja, T. 2008. Building teacher capital in pre-service teachers: Reflections on a new teacher-education initiative. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 33, no. 2: 68-84.

Goffman, E. 1959. *The presentation of self in everyday life.* London: Penguin

Hargreaves, A. 1994. *Changing teachers, changing times: teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age.* London: Continuum.

Harvey, D. 1989. *The condition of postmodernity*. Oxford: OUP

Hay, P. & Macdonald, D. 2010. Evidence for the social construction of ability. *Sport Education and Society* 15, no.1: 1-18.

Tony Rossi 31/5/11 2:09 PM
Formatted: Indent: Left: 0 cm, Hanging: 1.25 cm, Line spacing: double

Tony Rossi 31/5/11 2:04 PM
Formatted: Font:Italic

Hubbard, P. (2002). *Thinking geographically: space, theory, and contemporary human geography*. London: Continuum.

Lefebvre, H. 1991. *The production of space*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Macdonald, D. & Kirk, D. 1999. Pedagogy, the body and Christian identity. *Sport, Education and Society* 4, no. 2: 131-142.

McGregor, J. 2003. Making Spaces: teacher workplace topologies. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* 11, no. 3: 353-377.

McGregor, J. 2004. Spatiality and the place of the material in schools. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society,* no. 3: 347-372.

Nespor, J. 2002. Studying the spatialities of schooling. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society,* 10, no. 3: 483-491.

Richmond, H. J. 2002, September. Learners' lives: A narrative analysis. *The Qualitative Report, 7*(3). Retrieved [20th August 2010], from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR7-3/richmond.html

Rossi, T., Fry, J. & McNeill, M. & Tan, W.K.C. 2007. The Games Concept Approach (GCA) as a mandated practice: Views of Singaporean Teachers. *Sport Education and Society* 12, no. 1: 93-111.

Ryan, M. 2005. Systemic literacy initiatives: Story of regulation, conflict and compliance. *Australian Journal of language and Literacy*, 28, no.2, 114-126.

Smyth, J. 2006. The Politics of Reform of Teachers' Work and the Consequences for Schools: Some implications for teacher education. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 34, no. 3: 301-319.

Sparkes, A. 2002. *Telling tales in sport and physical activity: a qualitative journey*. Champaign, Ill. : Human Kinetics

Soja, E. W. 1989. *Postmodern Geographies; the reassertion of space in critical social theory*. New York: Verso

Soja, E.W. 1996. *Thirdspace: journeys to Los Angeles and other real and imagined places*. Cambridge, Mass: Blackwall.

Sirna, K., Tinning, R. & Rossi, T. 2008. The social tasks of learning to become a physical education teacher: considering the HPE subject department as a community of practice. *Sport, Education and Society* 13, no. 3: 285-300.

Sirna, K., Tinning, R. & Rossi, T. 2010. Social processes of Health & Physical Education teachers' identity formation: Reproducing and changing culture. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 31, no.1: 71-84

Siskin, L.S. & Little, J.W. 1995. *The subjects in question: Departmental organisation and the high school*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Talbert, J. 1995. Boundaries of teachers' professional communities in US high schools: Power and precariousness of the subject department. In *The subjects in question: Departmental organisation and the high school.* eds. L. S. Siskin, & J. W. Little, 68–94. New York: Teachers College Press.

Tinning, R. 2004. Rethinking the preparation of HPE teachers: ruminations on knowledge, identity, and ways of thinking. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 32, no. 3: 241 - 253.

Thomas, C., Reeve, J., Bingley, A., Brown, J., Payne, S. and Lynch, T. 2009. Narrative research methods in palliative care contexts: Two case studies. *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* 37, no. 5: 788-796.

Wenger, E. 1998. *Communities of practice: learning, meaning, and identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press

Zeichner, K. 2003. The adequacies and inadequacies of three current strategies to recruit, prepare, and retain the best teachers for all students. *Teachers College Record* 105, no. 3: 490-519.

Tony Rossi 31/5/11 1:56 PM
Deleted: .

Tony Rossi 31/5/11 2:07 PM
Formatted: Font:Times New Roman, English (AUS)

Tony Rossi 31/5/11 2:06 PM
Formatted: Font:Italic, English (AUS)